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TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

¶11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage May 2 on Taiwan government's restoration of diplomatic relations with Saint Lucia; the resignation of Minister of Labor Affairs Lee Ying-yuan out of his stated dissatisfaction with Premier Su Tseng-chang's delayed announcement of the increase in minimum wage and his intention to campaign for former Premier Frank Hsieh in the DPP presidential primary; and on a United Daily News poll showing that the gap between former Premier Hsieh and Premier Su is narrowing from 10 percentage points to 5 percentage points.

¶12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, the pro-independence, mass-circulation daily "Liberty Times" warned in its editorial that pan-Blue political figures' collaboration with China would not benefit Taiwan but would facilitate China's attempts to absorb the island. The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" editorialized that the primary purposes of Taiwan's diplomacy are to protect Taiwan's national security, to satisfy Taiwan's national interests, and to promote Taiwan as a valuable and essential member of the world community. The editorial added that it is unnecessary for all of Taiwan's embassies or representative offices to devote their primary energies to Taiwan's bids to join the United Nations and the World Health Organization, because these tasks are long-term goals and must be carried out by only Taiwan's representatives in New York and Geneva. End summary.

¶13. Cross-Strait Relations

A) "'To Benefit Taiwan' is False, but to 'Facilitate Absorbing Taiwan' is True"

The pro-independence, mass-circulation daily, "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] said in its editorial (05/02):

"... Just as in previous KMT-CPC forums, the 'joint suggestions' reached after the big show of united front tactics are filled with plans to hollow out and absorb Taiwan. From Taiwan's position, these 'joint suggestions' will integrate Taiwan and ultimately unify the island with China. However, these Taiwan people who play insignificant roles [i.e. KMT Honorary Chairman Lien Chan and his aides] have thought from China's perspective and even considered that they should take the credit [for openness in cross-Strait trade]....

"... The goal of China's united front strategy toward Taiwan is to integrate Taiwan's economy into that of China and define direct transportation [across the Taiwan Strait] and travel [to Taiwan] as domestic affairs, and to make Taiwan's young students [feel] attached to the mainland. Since 2000, especially since 2004, China has finally found an agent in Taiwan willing to publicly 'ally with the communists to restrain Taiwan,' to promote China's united front tactics, to pressure our government for proactive openness, to impede our country from strengthening its defense capability, and to confuse our compatriots' Taiwan identity. Those who hold flags in

Beijing yelled out slogans of 'anti-Communism' while they were in office; now they 'ally with the Communists' after they no longer have power. These people are paradoxical and ludicrous, and we cannot help but sigh and regret. ..."

B) "A More Flexible Foreign Policy"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (05/02):

"The decision by the World Health Organization secretariat last week to term Taiwan's application to join the World Health Assembly a 'non-issue,' and its declaration that Taiwan is ineligible for WHO membership because our country is not a sovereign state, stands as one more frustration in our efforts to secure just representation in international organizations.

"... This action, as well as Beijing's denigrating arrangement to treat Taiwan as the first 'domestic' stop for the Olympic torch relay, reflects the PRC's decision to identify 2007 as a 'year of opposition to Taiwan Independence' and to use every possible method and opportunity to squeeze Taiwan's international space and negate the reality of Taiwan's existence. ..."

"... In the run-up to the upcoming national legislative elections and next year's presidential election, it is essential for the DPP to re-examine both its short-term tactics and its long-term strategies in its external policy as a foundation for pursuing consensus toward the objective of securing Taiwan's proper place in the international community.

"After all, if the DPP or its presidential nominee does not engage in a thorough strategic re-examination, the KMT and its candidate, likely to be former KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou, will do so in a less friendly manner.

"The most fundamental question that needs to be asked is the purpose of Taiwan's diplomacy, which should be to both [sic] protect Taiwan's national security, satisfy our national interests and to promote Taiwan into a valuable and essential member of the world community.

"Certainly a long-term objective is to realize a position as a "normal country" that has its rightful and recognized position on the global stage under its own chosen name and with its own constitution, but the positing of this goal does not necessarily mean that it requires the allocation of the bulk of Taiwan's diplomatic relations [sic].

"... Such goals have important strategic importance, especially in terms of Taiwan's efforts to strive for legitimacy and justice on the world stage, but this fact does not mean that these long-term nominal goals require the lion's share of our limited diplomatic resources in terms of funds, manpower or brainpower.

"We also should be realistic about the benefits of U.N. membership for Taiwan, even if the daunting obstacles in front of this objective [sic], especially the rigid opposition by the PRC, which has a veto power as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council.

"For example, U.N. membership will not necessarily guarantee Taiwan's security from military aggression by the PRC, and hopes for international rescue will rely less on U.N. mechanisms than on Taiwan's main allies as well as the broader global civic society opposed to an expansionist and authoritarian PRC.

"The prime significance of the campaigns to join the U.N. and WHO as Taiwan is to say "no" to Beijing's "one-China" principle and its claim on Taiwan, to affirm the sovereignty of democratic Taiwan and its 23 million people, and to expose to the world both the genuine nature of the PRC regime and the timidity of U.N. members in the face of the PRC's expansionism abroad and systematic violation of human rights at home.

"There should also be no need for all of Taiwan's offshore embassies or representative offices to devote their primary energies to these campaigns, which are centered mainly in New York and Geneva.

"On the multilateral front, Taiwan needs to pay greater attention and adopt a broader strategic approach to managing its roles in the World Trade Organization and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, in which Taiwan already has membership.

"Although the WTO is called the "economic United Nations," the Geneva-based world trade body increasingly deals with issues that transcend purely economic or trade considerations and extend into the spheres of environmental protection, labor rights, cultural development and geopolitics and therefore requires strategic leadership and coordination at the presidential level, not simply the Ministry of Economic Affairs, in order to ensure that our actual role in the WTO reflects the values and interests of a "democratic and progressive" Taiwan.

"Scarcely less important is APEC, which is a crucial focus for contention between the United States, Japan, the PRC and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to deal with the rise of Asian regionalism and also to map out coordinated programs to cope

with regional development issues spanning the two sides of the Pacific.

"Another question of priorities involves the drive to secure bilateral free trade agreements, which is now focused on the United States and Japan, which no longer have former relations [sic: probably means 'formal relations'] with Taipei and are thus unlikely to ink FTAs with Taiwan in the near future but will not be loath to use the process to press Taiwan for more trade concessions.

"A more pragmatic approach would be for Taiwan to sign FTAs with its diplomatic partners and adopt a role as a "leading goose" and market to help lift the economic levels of our allies and consolidate such partnerships."

YOUNG